



City of Rockville

MEMORANDUM

September 2, 2005

TO: Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group (TNPAG)

FROM: Ann Wallas, Planner II, Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: TNPAG Meeting Thursday September 15, 2005 – Housing

Our next meeting will be on Thursday September 15, 2005, at 7pm at the Glenview Mansion Dining Room. We will be continuing our discussion on housing issues and will have presentations from the Historic Preservation staff, who have documented the types of housing in Twinbrook at the subdivision level, as well as information on the demographic and social aspects of the existing housing stock. A separate packet of information will be send out next Friday, September 9, that will include background information to help you prepare for our meeting.

However, the *Mayor and Council are currently considering a six-month moratorium on mansionization development* and will be discussing this issue at their next meeting on *Monday September 12, 2005* – three days prior to our meeting. I am enclosing a copy of a White Paper on mansionization that was discussed by the Mayor and Council in July. The Mayor and Council Agenda Sheet for September 12 will be available on-line next week and I will send you an email link to it.

You might also find it helpful to either attend the Mayor and Council session on September 12, or watch it on Channel 11. The session will be broadcast live and a Mayor and Council Review will be shown at 7:30am, 11:30am, 6:30pm and 10:30pm on the days following. Unfortunately the entire session will not be replayed until Friday afternoon, after our meeting. We will naturally wish to discuss mansionization, and it's implications for Twinbrook, at our meeting.

The following information is enclosed with this memo:

- White Paper on mansionization, including the Agenda cover sheet.
- “What’s the Best Way to Address ‘Supersized Homes’? (Hint: It’s Not Through Zoning)” article by Roger K. Lewis, Washington Post F04, Saturday August 20, 2005

If you were unable to join us on August 25, you will also find the information on Land Use that was handed out during the meeting.

TWINBROOK NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN: TOOLS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

As part of the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan, the Historic Preservation group, part of the City's Community Planning and Development Services Department, has researched the history of the area and is compiling data on existing housing types. Twinbrook is an area worth remembering for many reasons, one of which is its status as one of the first large-scale, suburban post-World War II housing developments in the D.C. metropolitan area.

Change can be radical with total redevelopment like the Town Center project, or creeping and incremental. But change is constant and accumulative and nothing ever stays exactly the same for long without special measures. If a neighborhood character or features are desirable and the goal is to preserve it or them, then tools should be implemented to ensure the outcome.

The City has several tools available for retaining the common design features that residents feel are important to defining the character of a neighborhood. Staff is currently reviewing additional tools and one or more than one of these in combination, or none of them, may be applicable to Twinbrook, or to specific parts of Twinbrook. Every neighborhood must be examined on its own and any selected approaches must be individually tailored to best achieve the community's objectives. *However, it is useful for the community to know what tools are available and what the advantages and disadvantages of each may be.*

Citizens often think that local historic designation is the only way of preserving the overall character of a neighborhood. It does present the highest level of protection for historic areas that have retained most of their architecture and original materials, but requires development of guidelines appropriate to each character area and a high level of review for exterior changes. Not all areas qualify for local or national designation, nor is it appropriate for all areas.

In the Twinbrook area, historic designation is probably not the most effective or the most appropriate method. In the Twinbrook neighborhoods, many houses of the same general design and material were built by a developer for sale to the general public. Speedy construction of large numbers of housing units at a reasonable cost was the objective. While they are readily identifiable as a type of Post WWII housing, individual Twinbrook houses do not have the kind of architectural features and design that make them eligible as historic sites or districts and most have been altered. Even in historic Levittown, only one of the original and most intact houses has been preserved as a historic site to show where everyone began.

Historic designation is only one way a neighborhood can preserve the elements that it finds desirable and discourage undesirable changes. Neighborhood Conservation Districts offer another approach to provide stability and define future direction for a neighborhood.

Neighborhood Conservation Districts: These Districts maintain and conserve the character-defining streetscapes of older neighborhoods while providing the flexibility to improve property and expand homes without approval from another review body. They offer an alternative in many older areas that have experienced some deterioration, demolition, or incompatible alterations.

Neighborhood Conservation Districts create overall development standards for individual areas that are closer to the height, design, and lot coverage of the existing housing stock. These development standards are adopted in place of the existing zoning development standards, such as those for an R-60 lot. Options are built in for additions and other improvements that make older houses livable. The standards are developed using data on the existing structures and actual site design. For example, if the majority of the original houses are less than 25 feet tall and the community wants to preserve that characteristic, then the conservation district standard maximum actual height would be 25 feet. If projecting front garages, known as “snout garages” are not present and not wanted, they would not be allowed under the conservation district. This type of approach is currently being explored in Lincoln Park, possibly in combination with historic designation of specific properties to protect the historic character of that community.

Community support is essential. Conservation districts do not succeed unless the community actively supports the program. Some incentives, such as workshops, revolving loan funds, grants and free design consulting may help. For many neighborhoods, stability and clear future direction are incentive enough.

City Anti-Mansionization Measures: The City is exploring changes to the zoning standards in general and to residential development standards for the R-60, R-75 and R-90 zoning categories in particular as “Mansionization” becomes more commonplace in Rockville. Mansionization generally means demolishing an older house (generally a house less than 1,000 square feet and less than 25 feet tall) to build a house to the maximum legal building envelope. While a 40-foot tall house of 6,000 square feet is perfectly appropriate in King Farm, it may overpower adjacent one- or two- story neighbors in older existing neighborhoods.

Legally, the City has no power to prevent this at the moment as long as all the development standards of minimum setback, maximum height, and maximum lot coverage are followed. Nor does the City want to eliminate upgrading of private property. However, the current standards were not designed for older neighborhoods that were built to a different scale. It has been calculated that if development were proposed that utilized the maximum allowed on a conforming R-60, 6,000 square foot lot, the resulting structure could have 2,100 square feet per level and be close to 7,000 square feet from attic to basement and be 40 feet high. Only two off-street parking spaces are required per detached dwelling in Rockville. That would be a dramatic change in the neighborhood and it could cumulatively have great effects on storm water drainage, public utilities, and parking. If the City implements special development standards to reduce the unwanted impacts of mansionization, Twinbrook areas could ask to be included.

Historic Districts

There may be houses in Twinbrook that have not been altered on the exterior (i.e. they retain their original massing and materials such as siding, windows, doors, roof) that really show the original as-built appearance of the houses. Homeowners with houses that have been unaltered, or minimally altered, on the exterior may be eligible for historic designation as an example of post-WWII production housing. In addition, there are still structures in the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan Area that pre-date the Twinbrook development. The City’s preservation

staff will be locating and surveying these buildings. Some of these may be eligible for historic designation as well.

Rockville Historic Districts are areas in which buildings and their settings that are significant historically or architecturally are protected against changes to their character and materials. Only the exterior is protected or regulated and additions and other changes are encouraged to be sited on the rear to retain the streetscape. Historic district designation is the most effective preservation tool to protect neighborhood character, but not all neighborhoods meet the qualifications. The City's Historic District Commission (HDC) has the authority to review changes to the exterior appearance of a structure or site to ensure that changes are compatible with the structure and streetscape. County, state and federal tax incentives may reimburse up to 50% of the costs of renovations and maintenance

Eligibility Criteria for Rockville Local Historic District Designation

The City of Rockville has adopted historic designation criteria based on the criteria for placement on the National Register of Historic Places: historical, cultural, architectural, and design significance. Archeological sites are also eligible. Structures representing architectural styles, periods, and methods of construction that have particular significance to Rockville are given special attention. Integrity of workmanship and materials are considered. There are no date restrictions, although federal regulations require review of structures that are 50 years of age or older when federal or state funds are utilized.

If the site is found to meet one or more of the adopted criteria, the level of site significance (local, state or national) is determined and the condition of the structure and site is evaluated. Single site historic districts, or landmark sites, are held to a higher standard than contributing sites in a historic district. After designation, any exterior changes to the property must be approved by the Historic District Commission through design review.

National Register of Historic Places Listing is honorary with no design review required unless federal funds or permits are involved. The National Register of Historic Places recognizes districts, buildings, structures, objects, and sites for their significance in American history, archeology, architecture, engineering, or culture, and identifies them as worthy of preservation. Under federal law, owners of private property listed in the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as they choose provided that there is no Federal involvement. Established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is a program of the U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and is administered at the State level by the Maryland Historical Trust. Owners of properties listed in the National Register may be eligible for financial assistance for historic preservation projects, including Federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation.

Easement Donations are executed by the owner of a historically designated property and are used to gain financial advantages from a property while preserving the environmental setting. A preservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement that protects a significant historic, archaeological, or cultural resource and provides assurance that the property's intrinsic character

and values will be preserved by subsequent owners. An entire historic structure or just the façade or interior may qualify. Under the terms of an easement, a property owner grants a portion of, or interest in, the property rights to an organization whose mission includes historic preservation. Once recorded, an easement becomes part of the property's chain of title and usually "runs with the land" in perpetuity.

If certain criteria are met, the owner also can receive a Federal income tax deduction equivalent to the value of the property interest given away to a charitable or governmental organization and the donor may also benefit from reduced property assessments and reduced estate taxes. IRS criteria include documentation that the building is a "certified historic structure," and listing in the National Register is the fastest way to meet that requirement.



City of Rockville

MEMORANDUM

September 9, 2005

TO: Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group (TNPAG)

FROM: Ann Wallas, Planner II, Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: TNPAG Meeting Thursday September 15, 2005 – Housing

Our next meeting will be on Thursday September 15, 2005, at 7pm at the Glenview Mansion Dining Room. We will be continuing our discussion on housing issues and will have a presentation from Shelby Spillers of the Historic Preservation staff. During the summer Shelby and her team have conducted a survey of Twinbrook at the subdivision level, the purpose of which was to identify, and document with photographs, the different types of houses within the neighborhood. As part of the survey Twinbrook's historic houses were identified and documented as well.

The Mayor and Council are currently considering a six-month moratorium on mansionization development and will be discussing this issue at their next meeting on Monday September 12, 2005. Two related Agenda items are before them: a recommendation to consider imposing a six-month moratorium on mansionization development, and a recommendation to authorize staff to file a text amendment regarding setback, height, impervious surface and other requirements in the residential districts. Both items are intended to act as interim measures to address the Mayor and Council's initial concerns and should allow time for staff to work out a more detailed approach to the issue. As you know from our work with the TNPAG, all of the single-family homes in the Twinbrook area have an R-60 zoning designation, with the same set of Development Standards, but different neighborhoods have evolved differently over time and a "one size fits all" approach may no longer be appropriate.

I hope that you will be able to either attend the Mayor and Council session on September 12, or watch it on Channel 11. The session will be broadcast live and a Mayor and Council Review will be shown at 7:30am, 11:30am, 6:30pm and 10:30pm on the days following. Unfortunately the entire session will not be replayed until Friday afternoon, after our meeting.

We will naturally wish to discuss mansionization, and it's implications for Twinbrook, at our meeting. Somer Cross, of the Planning staff, is working on this issue, and she will join us to assist in the discussion.

The following information is enclosed with this memo:

- Agenda for TNPAG Meeting on September 15, 2005
- Housing styles in Twinbrook
- Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan: Tools for Neighborhood Stabilization
- Map showing Twinbrook subdivisions
- Map showing Twinbrook housing prices
- Demographic Trends in Twinbrook Housing
- A set of meeting notes from our meeting on August 25, 2005, together with the Power Point presentation given at that meeting.